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That Certain Swing is Needed For Sepia Slang Expressions Creeping Real Snappy, Lazy Music Into Stage, Radio And Movies Says Duke Ellington

By Duke Ellington

(Exclusively for The Metropolitan News.)

It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing. . . The Dixieland Jazz Band came from way down yonder in New Orleans, right after the war and brought to Broadway a new dance tempo that exactly suited post-war tastes. The origins of the name they gave their music are doubtful. . . No one knew a diary on Rampart street, N. Orleans. . . but no one has questioned its suitability and no one has ever been able to think up a better name for it than "jazz."

But jazz now embraces a number of completely different types of music. Paul Whiteman specializes in one style. Guy Lombardo in another. My own and a few other orchestras have exploited a third style, until the only thing the three styles have in common is "swing," which is Harlem for rhythm.

Paul Whiteman's orchestra was the first to rise to international fame on the crest of the jazz craze. Paul's instrument was a viola; when he organized his orchestra he naturally included violins and a full representation of saxophones, woodwinds and rhythm instruments. In short his orchestra was a smaller, modified symphony orchestra and his treatment of jazz was symphonic. Comparable to the

instrumentation of his orchestras, theatre orchestras and musical comedy orchestras. Among other modern band leaders, Jack Denny introduced a refinement to this type of orchestra by discarding brass, introducing a piano-accordion and concentrating on woodwinds—clarinets, oboes and bassoons.

Guy Lombardo's technique was probably originated by Ben Pollack, altho Guy has done the most to popularize it, and introduced an important refinement. Rudy Vallee introduced another departure, going to an extreme in another direction but concentrating on the same effect, that of sweet music. Pollack's and Lombardo's music is sweet and has plenty of swing; Lombardo dropped Pollack's two violins and concentrated on muted brass and his saxophones and clarinets. Rudy Vallee, on the other hand, kept the violins but discarded brass altogether.

My music, if you wish a succinct definition, is "screwed." We have not followed the fetishes of symphonic musicians, and have not hesitated to break rules and even make new ones. We know that we have offended a great many people in the process, particularly "legitimate" musicians, but I think that we have also made a few friends. To begin with, my men are all natural musicians; many of them could play expertly before they could read a note of music. Now contrary to a not one of them who cannot read and interpret intricate parts with ease. The fiction that they are not musically educated is probably traceable to the fact that in their dance, club, concert and theater engagements they usually play without music or music stands but this is only because their natural musical aptitude has enabled them to memorize long scores quite perfectly.

Perhaps I had better explain what I mean by "screwed" and at the same time illustrate the principal difference between my own orchestra and its music and Whiteman's and Lombardo's, aside from instrumentation. My band, of course, is principally brass—three trumpets, three trombones, four men who double

Ellington

says that Jazz embraces something more than just jazz. "It don't mean a thing unless you got that swing." Duke is pictured here with his orchestra, which has inaugurated a new style of playing "jazz." Ellington in his article explains his style of music and how it differs from that of other popular musicians of the day. Duke explains that his men could play their instruments before they could read a note. "They are just natural musicians."



on saxophones and clarinets and four rhythm—strings, brass, guitar and banjo, drums and myself at the piano.

The principal feature of our arrangements is our use of dissonant chords, suspensions and dynamics. Dissonant chords are the opposite of resolved chords, which sound complete and satisfying to the listener. Dissonant chords require another note, or combination of notes, to resolve them, and some times we do not resolve them until the end of a chorus. This effect, which Guy Lombardo also employs to an extent, results in gaining and holding the attention of the listener and is designed to make the music interesting.

Suspensions are the tricks of solo virtuosi on any instrument; Kreisler employs them on the violin. They consist in playing around a melody, playing notes of involved harmonic relation to the notes of the melody, but winding up on the melody at the end of the phrase. Any good instrumental soloist with any good orchestra employs suspensions with striking effect. In my band, I am particularly fortunate in having a brass section and a saxophone section capable of playing them in harmonic unison against the melody as carried by another section.

Dynamics, which Paul Whiteman employs with splendid effect, are simply the use of different shadings of sound ranging from pianissimo to fortissimo and are standard symphonic practice, but much neglected by popular orchestras.

Above all, of course, "we got rhythm." We play as we do because we like to play for dancers and enjoy playing that way. Perhaps we are expressing ourselves, or our heritage, but we are not doing it consciously. It's fun and we think, in all modesty that our type of music is the most truly American, because it surely originated in these United States and owes the least to the classics and nothing at all to any contemporary foreign style. We've only one rule we always follow—it don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing.



DUKE ELLINGTON

Duke Ellington, who writes exclusive feature articles for the METROPOLITAN NEWS was born April 29, 1899 in Washington, D. C. He lives with his parents and younger sister Ruth, who has been visiting in Detroit, in an apartment at Edgewood avenue, in the fashionable "Sugar Hill" district of Harlem. He only lives there two or three weeks out of the year.

It was while he was a high school student in Washington, D. C. that he won the nickname of "Duke." His classmates changed Edward Kennedy Ellington to Duke because he was so fastidious about his clothes. . . and he still is a style setter. He wanted to be an artist. He received an honorary mention in art. He decided upon a career of commercial art.

But his parents, Mr. and Mrs. J. E. Ellington loved music and insisted that he master the piano. So he practiced daily upon that instrument. He believed he would make a better artist than a musician.

"Duke" buys ten or fifteen suits at a time, wearing a favorite for six weeks at a stretch. He would sit up all night for seven nights a week, if he could find some one to do so with him. And like all the rest of us, hates to get out of bed in the morning.

Always calls a rehearsal for 9 a. m. and never arrives until ten. His men know this and always come an hour later than the time he sets. He never uses a baton, directs his orchestra by a movement of his head, shoulders, elbows and even eyebrows.

The last registration for the conducted by the Metropolitan News is Tuesday, June 4, at 5 p. m. Register now.

"Should Married Women Work?" Controversy Waxes Warm! "Yes, They Should," Says Marguerite; "No They Shouldn't" Replies Mabel What Do YOU Think?

By JACKIE MACK

The make-up editor on the paper gave Miss Simmons a hard way to go last week, treating her just like the technician on a radio hookup who turns a guy off the air right in the middle of a speech. That doesn't stop her, though. She is still as angry and disgusted with the married women as she ever was. Continued from Tuesday's edition, Miss Simmons says:

This woman that I thought was my friend don't need to work. She got married two years ago, and her husband has a good job running on the road. They live in the highest priced building in town, and she always wears good clothes. They don't have bills, and they don't have any children, so what would she want with money? I am not like the person that wouldn't ask her, so I went over to find out why she took the job right out of my hands.

And Miss Mack, you can imagine what that cock-eyed woman told me: "My dear," she says, "I find it lonesome sitting around the house all day with—(her husband) on the road all the time. He doesn't know I'm working, you know." She could be that airy about it. He doesn't know I'm working. That shows that she doesn't need the money.

And all my folks sit at home woman standing down there in line the next morning when I went to apply for the job? She had gotten up earlier than I to roll me for the job.

What makes me boil is that this woman had worked with me in another shop before she got married, and had done that kind of work longer than I had, so she got the job. I cried and cried all night. Of course I am staying at home, and don't have to spend my money for room and board,

"Let's truck on down to the number and knock a couple pills of weed before trilling to the pad. Man, I feel very fly on this mellow day. I want to get high as a kite on dry gage, no more lush for me. I was knocked out this morning on a roach. My frail, Jack, is a solid sender. She's a killer. If she ain't glory. That chick is ready. I chalked off some mugging that she was doing with a guy. But the John nipped. She laid her racket gate and now she's going to town. She finally fell in there. And the Oscar is eating up her line of five satchmo. She ain't no Peola. Did I read, gate?"

The above is the style of slang that is in vogue today. You can hear this type of lingo just about anywhere. There are those who say it is Harlemaese, some say it is Grandtownese.

Where does the majority of the slang originate? Musicians, theatrical people and Reefer smokers in truth are responsible for the present day verbiage.

"If he says he swam to China. Wants to sell you South Carolina. Then you know you're talking to That Funny Reefer man."

We will attempt to translate the above conversation. Viz. Let's go to a flat that sells marijuana cigarettes and buy a couple. Because I am feeling fine, and the sun is

shining brightly. I want to have that exhilarating feeling of ecstasy offered by the drug I am not going to drink any more whiskey. I smoked a marijuana cigarette butt this morning and I am still feeling its effect. My sweetheart is very beautiful and wise, she has been going around with a fellow for his money. He is not wise to her, because she is a very clever actress.

We find a great deal of this slang, which is typically Sepian, creeping into the motion pictures and stage. Many of the phrases semi-technical expressions are only used by certain branches of the theatrical profession. For example a musician will say when he hears an excellent orchestra playing, "Man can those cats swing? Are they beating out rhythm. Listen to their riff."

Whenever those who use the slang expressions are elated or excited over something they say, "It sends me! It is a solid sender!" The term is used to express good. Synonymous are killer, murder and mutiny. Viz. "That band is murder. Murder in the first degree. The phrase "Muggings" can be made to mean, courting a girl, or making grimaces before a microphone. Jiving means, "Are you telling the truth?" You are flattering me." "Yeah man," a true sepia slang expression has gained favor through out the nation.

A tap dancer may say to another one, whose dancing

pleases him, "Beat it out. He is whipping the boards." "Boards" meaning stage or floor. A musician may say "He plays a lotta piano."

Many of the expressions are provoked by opium smokers. The song Minnie The Moocher played by Cab Calloway which gave the peculiar yell, "Ho de ho de ho, hi-de-hi-de-hi," and the musical story of Cookie Joe and Minnie The Moocher contain choice bits of expression peculiar to dope addicts. Viz:

Listen to the story of Minnie the Coocher

She was a low-down hoochie coocher.

She was the roughest and the toughest frail.

But Minnie ha da heart as big as a whale

Ho-de-ho, hi-de-hi-de-hi,

Yes Minnie had a heart as big as a whale.

There are many expressions used which are meaningless, such as Cab's Hi-de-hi-de-ho. Willie Bryant's chi, chi, chi, Louis Armstrong's "Satchmo" which was changed from "Satchel" is known throughout America and Europe.

Louis Armstrong's "Satchel" used to mean satchel-headed. Now it means anybody, just a form of salute. Arm strong used to refer to his men as satchel-headed, gate-mouth and gizzard. The gate-mouth has been shortened to "Gate." Its meaning is the same as "Satchmo." Gizzard has become obsolete. Many credit Duke Ellington with

such terms as "Killer, Mutiny and murder."

The expressions "beat to my socks" meaning broke; "beat your gums" meaning to listen and have something to talk, are of unknown origin. Here are a few of the common expressions with their definitions:

Wampas, street Broom trilling, trucking mean to walk. Trucking in theater circles has been changed to mean a semi-dance and walk, which was made popular by Horace Stewart, known on the stage as "Nicomachus." It is a sort of a lazy rhythmic hop. Weed, Pill dry gage, reefer, Marijuana cigarette. Hip-wise, chick, frail, broad girl or woman. Chalk, to see. Peola, passing for white or being snooty. "A complete bringdown," means meet with disfavor, sarcasm, etc. Read means to psychoanalyze.

The writer has often seen two persons, well versed in language hold a lengthy conversational menage, which would be unintelligible to a casual listener. The gangster, the thieves and crooks have their own peculiar slang expressions. But that used by sepians is more universally known. This is due to the fact, that the phrases become a part of their daily language and they use it on the stage and radio. Newspapers pick up the various expressions, likewise the movies and we find ourselves saying, "It is mellow, a solid sender."

but my folks feel that I am old enough to help them take care of the bills.

Since when did it come to the place where married women don't take time out to see every man who comes in a place, like the letter last week said? I think that they are so selfish and stuck on their own good looks that they like to see how many men they can get to fall for them. Because they have a man of their own doesn't mean that "they are taken out of circulation." They still try to see if there isn't a better fish in the sea than the one they caught.

You see how I feel about this, and I bet there are dozens of other girls who feel like I do. The women are taking jobs away from us, and from men that we might be able to marry. I almost feel like joining up with the reds if that would do any good, and seeing if they can't do something about it.

Why don't the married women stay home where they belong and give us single girls a chance?

Sincerely,
(Miss) Marguerite H. Simmons

Is I ever more mad? Is I boiling? Here little blue eyes (they aren't blue, incidentally, but I'm that riled) Jackie Mack goes to the work of find in herself something to talk about, and the blissing young people all fly to my rescue and keep me from having to cudgel my brain over it, and first thing you know one of Chicago's leading columnists has gone and stolen my stuff. I am that mad that I shall even call names, and quote: Elsie Robinson, of the Chicago Evening American, lends

her column "Listen World" to the fray. And while I seethe and froth at the mouth, I have to admit that the dear sister who wrote this letter knows what she is talking about. And since this is the issue for the rebuttal of that scathing attack on married women led last Friday by Miss Marguerite Simmons, I shall cite Miss Robinson's entire article.

Some of the arguments have been offered before in this tournament of ours, but they still make good controversy, so here goes. . . and secretly I am flattered that someone else thinks my stuff good enough to use too: "Listen, World,—Do Bosses Prefer 'Em Married?" by Elsie Robinson

"I like to start something in this column. Something that will cause the family to think quickly and talk noisily for sort of commotion is good for both families and newspapers—usually I can promote my rumpuses without outside aid. But now and then a document crashes into this department which makes my best efforts look like a mere whisper. Such is the following:

"I tried it on my own domestic outfit. We ended in the pangs bed after demolishing all the best china, busting the bridge lamp, biting three taffeta pillows to shreds and wallowing in the goldfish bowl. Which I call a good test of any newspaper article. I accordingly pass it on to you—hoping for the worst. Dear Elsie Robinson:

I have noticed discussions in your column about the comparative efficiency of

single and married women workers. It seems to me that it is one of the biggest subjects before the public today and I'd like to have my say about it. I'm all for the married worker and here are my reasons.

"The married girl—she is superior as a worker to the single girl because she is working for a purpose. In almost every case she is helping to pay for her own home, or contributing to the support of a mother, sister, or brother. She is more attentive to her work, because she has so much at stake that she cannot afford to be fired. She does not primp for the office sheiks, because she has a man of her own whom she is tickled to rush home to, to feed and pamper.

"After finishing her work at home, the married woman worker is content to get to bed so she can be fresh and lively in the morning. Not once do you hear a peep out of her, though she may be terribly tired. She is happy working toward her ideal and when her dream comes true she is willing to step out of the office into her home to make room for someone who needs the job more than she does.

"The single girl—almost always the single girl gets to the office many minutes late, takes more minutes to put her first layer of war paint, over her unwashed face, smears on the cupid's bow, then saunters out into the main office to make a killing. If she is a steno she will sit and yawn between the letters, uttering occasional "What was that?" or "I beg your pardons" Sits half awake all

day wondering what will be the next date, whether Jack will call, where Jim is, etc., etc. Writes a little note to Tom. Dick and Harry. Phones and tries to make a date for lunch. Sees a new guy in the office and quits everything in her effort to land him. When five o'clock comes she still has a number of letters unfinished, but does she bother to do them? She does not, for she has a date with Phil that evening, and must rush home, grab a bite, leap into her best clothes and dash out again on a mad carousel until 3 a. m. And so on, week after week.

"And this is why more and more married women are being given jobs in preference to single girls.

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(Signed) 'Mabel' "Which is what I call inflammatory literature. Have you my permission to respond? You have. With this exception. Sledge hammers, paving blocks, underdone eggs, overdone cats are all barred as modes of repartee. If you can't do enough damage with plain American language, commit your murders elsewhere."

And that is what elsie Robinson thinks. You folk ought to be well trained by now to think up some saucy answers, and get this thing settled once and for all. It is dragging too much to suit me. Now what can you do about it? Send in your letters to Jackie Mack, care of Metropolitan News, 3506 So. Michigan ave.

Berlin is stunned by the world's denunciation of its press censorship, which permits weather reports, recipes for left-overs, and outspoken castigation of the wildflower vandal.—Atlanta Constitution.

Apparently it is about time Amelia Earhart settled down long enough to acquaint herself with the new bridge-rules—Indianapolis Star.

The last registration for the city-wide bridge tournament being conducted by the Metropolitan News is Tuesday, June 4, at 5 p. m. Register now.

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